

## 12 Sep 02 Employee Information Exchange – Understanding Your Future

### 12 Sep - 0900 Session:

Q1. If I am separated during the RIF, what happens to Thrift Savings?

**Answer:** If you have \$3,500 or less, it is paid-out to the employee (the employee cannot keep it in the Thrift account). If you have \$3,500 or more, the employee has the option to have it paid-out or the money can be held for distribution at a later date. The Thrift Savings money is also portable in that it can be transferred to another retirement plan.

Q2. How many years do you have to be enrolled in the Thrift Savings Plan before it is vested?

**Answer.** Vesting means that you have met the service requirements that entitle you to Agency Automatic (1%) Contributions and their earnings when you leave Federal service. Service requirements for vesting do not apply to any other type of contributions. Therefore:

- FERS and CSRS participants are *always* vested in their own contributions and the earnings on their contributions.
- FERS participants are *always* vested in the matching contributions their agencies make, as well as the earnings on the matching contributions.

Most FERS employees become vested in their Agency Automatic (1%) Contributions after completing 3 years of Federal civilian service. FERS employees in congressional and certain noncareer positions become vested in their Agency Automatic (1%) Contributions after completing 2 years of civilian service.

All Federal civilian service counts toward vesting in your TSP account — not just your service while you are a TSP participant. Service covered by USERRA also counts toward vesting. If you are a FERS participant, your agency reports your TSP Service Computation Date (TSP-SCD), which is used by the TSP record keeper to determine whether you are vested. Your TSP-SCD is shown on your participant statement; if you believe it is incorrect or have questions about it, contact your personnel office. (Your TSP-SCD will never be earlier than January 1, 1984.)

If you leave Federal service before satisfying the vesting requirement for your Agency Automatic (1%) Contributions, these contributions and the earnings on them will be forfeited to the TSP.

If you die before separating from service, all amounts in your TSP account will be vested automatically.

Q3. Are detailed transition plans being developed?

**Answer:** Yes, plans for either scenario (MEO win or contractor win) were staffed with the Steering Committee on 1 Oct 02.

Q4. Can students use the tuition assistance program ?

**Answer:** Generally, students are not eligible to use the tuition assistance program; however, they should check with DCTEE on their particular needs.

Q5. During the RIF process, will CPOC accept other Resumes when evaluating employee qualifications, e.g. OPM-USA-Jobs website? Can employees add supplemental pages?

**Answer:** CPOC prefers the OF 612 form, but will accept other resume formats when adding these to the Official Personnel Folder (OPF). Employees can add supplemental pages to their resume.

### **12 Sep - 1300 Session:**

Q6. If an employee takes a VERA and retires early, can they still contribute to the Thrift Savings Plan until they are of age to start to draw?

**Answer:** No. 5 CFR Part 1600 Separation from Government employment means the cessation of employment with the Federal Government or the U.S. Postal Service (or with any other employer from a position that is deemed to be Government employment for purposes of participating in the TSP) for 31 or more full calendar days.

Q7. If an employee is in a save pay status already due to a previous RIF, how will they be placed in the next RIF? Can they be placed into a position that is graded the same as the original position, which was higher than the position they are in now? Can they be placed by the PPP into a position of the higher grade?

**Answer:** Competitive service employees may register "no higher" than current permanent grade or retained grade.

For example, if an employee is downgraded from a GS-8 to a GS-6 as a result of BRAC. The employee then serves two years of Grade retention at the GS-8 level . Now, as a GS-6, the employee may only register in PPP Program "A" at the grade GS-6 level, no higher than your current grade level of GS-6.

The following information from a PPP fact sheet provides information regarding PPP registration in Program "A"----which is the program we register separated employees. Program "R" (Retained grade) is the program we register employees who have been downgraded.

## PRIORITY PLACEMENT PROGRAM (PPP)

### PROGRAM “A” FACT SHEET<sup>1</sup>

**General:** It is DoD policy to minimize the adverse effects on employees caused by actions such as, but not limited to, reductions-in-force (RIF), base closures, realignments, consolidations, contracting out, position classification decisions, rotation from overseas, and transfers of function (TOF). Program “A” is the primary means for implementing this policy throughout DoD; however, it does not supersede the statutory or regulatory rights of employees or former employees. Chapter 3 of the PPP Operations Manual contains specific information on registration in this program

#### **DISPLACED EMPLOYEES**

**Eligibility:** Current employees on an appointment without time limitation in the competitive service who have career or career-conditional status or those in the excepted service with or without personal competitive status may register in the PPP if they are scheduled for displacement action as covered in PPP Operations Manual, Chapter 3, Paragraph B.1.b. The employee’s performance and conduct must be fully satisfactory. Unless early registration is authorized, employees become eligible to register when they: receive a specific RIF notice of separation or demotion; decline in writing an official RIF reassignment or demotion out of the commuting area; decline in writing a TOF or a covered management-directed reassignment out of the commuting area; or receive a notice of furlough for six months or more. Employees entitled to severance pay are mandatorily registered. Employees must register while still employed.

**Skills:** Employees must register for their current skill and may register for a total of 5 skills, provided they are well qualified. Mandatory registrants must be registered for all skills for which well qualified, including appropriate special skill identifiers (i.e., GS-300, WG-00000, or WG-01111).

**High Grade:** Competitive service employees may register no higher than current permanent grade or retained grade. If registering for other pay systems, registration is restricted to the grade having the representative rate equal or below the rep rate of the registrant’s current permanent or retained grade. If registering from GS to other pay systems, the individual may register for the highest grade for which well qualified; the potential gaining activity makes the determination as to whether an offer should be made based on their local pay scale. For excepted service employees refer to Chapter 3, Paragraph F.

**Low Grade:** Generally, employees may register down to and including 3 GS grades or equivalent below current permanent grade. Exceptions for GS-9 and GS-11 employees in 2-grade interval jobs, employees with a RIF job offer, employees covered by pay banding systems, and positions in AD, WB, and WT pay systems are contained in PPP Operations Manual, Chapter 3, Paragraph F.

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<sup>1</sup> Fact Sheet is for information only. This Fact Sheet does not establish, revise, replace or supplement policy or procedures contained in Defense Civilian Personnel Manual Chapter 1800 or the PPP Operations Manual.

**Priority:** “1”, “2”, or “3” based on the severity of the action (PPP Operations Manual, Chapter 3, Paragraph E, and Chapter 5, Paragraph B).

**Separation Date:** For employees facing separation, the effective date of separation will be entered on the registration. For those scheduled for change to lower grade (CLG), the effective date of the action will be entered.

**Release Date:** For employees facing separation, one year from the date of separation will be entered on the registration. For those scheduled for CLG, the effective date of the action will be entered.

**Area of Referral:** Employees facing separation are registered for the minimum number of activities nearest their duty station likely to provide a reasonable opportunity for placement. They may not skip over DoD activities or states to register for more distant locations. Activities in an adjoining zone that are no more distant from the employee’s duty station than the furthestmost activity selected in the zone may be included in the initial area of referral. (Overseas displaced employees register in accordance with Chapter 5, Paragraph B.5). Employees who are scheduled for RIF CLG or who have declined a RIF CLG and are facing separation are restricted to DoD activities within their commuting area. Expansion beyond these limits requires CARE Program Coordinator approval.

**Offer Response Time:** Registrants in the continental U.S. (CONUS) must accept or decline offers from CONUS activities within 2 calendar days, and registrants outside CONUS must respond within 3 calendar days.

## **DoD RETAINED GRADE PLACEMENT PROGRAM**

### **PROGRAM “R” FACT SHEET<sup>2</sup>**

**General:** The DoD Retained Grade Placement Program is the only means by which DoD employees under grade retention are afforded consideration for mandatory placement at DoD activities in the registrant’s commuting area. Chapter 15 of the PPP Operations Manual contains specific information on registration in this program.

**Eligibility:** Registration is mandatory for all DoD employees receiving retained grade. Employees with grade retention in the excepted service (excluding National Guard Technicians) who do not have personal competitive status are eligible for excepted positions only. Employees may not be registered simultaneously in Programs “A” and “R”.

**Skills:** Must register for the retained grade position and all other skills in the same pay group for which the registrant is well qualified.

**High/Low Grade:** Must register for the retained grade only.

**Priority:** Registrants are assigned a “2” when demoted 2 or more GS grades or the equivalent and a “3” when demoted less than 2 GS grades or the equivalent. If a Priority

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“2” accepts or declines an offer at an intervening grade, the priority must be reviewed to determine if it is still appropriate.

**Separation Date:** The effective date of retained grade entitlement.

**Release Date:** The date retained grade entitlement terminates.

**Area of Referral:** Must normally register for all DoD activities in the commuting area that have not been formally announced for closure.

**Job Offers:** Valid and reasonable offers must be made in writing and conform to 5 CFR Part 536 (reference (a)). Registrants must accept or decline offers within 2 calendar days. “R” program registrants are ineligible for temporary or term positions.

Q8. How are overhires affected by the RIF.

**Answer:** No impact, Overhires (permanent employees) are treated the same as other permanent employees during the RIF.

Q9. How are NAF employees affected during the RIF:

What is impact if an appropriated fund slot is filled by a NAF employee?

**Answer:** The NAF employee cannot be bumped or displaced as NAF employees are in a separate competitive area for RIF.

If the MEO eliminates a position currently filled by a NAF, what happens to the NAF employee.

**Answer:** There are no MEO positions eliminated that have NAF incumbents.

Q10. Under Tuition Assistance, can the expense of the “Final Exam” be reimbursed to employees for expenses to obtain professional credentials (e.g. Certified Internet Webmaster)?

Are Final Exam costs reimbursed if the employee takes the related course?

**Answer:** While this has been approved, DA has not issued guidance for implementation to CPOCs. NECPOC expects to receive this within the next two months. They then will forward this to the field as local guidance.

Are Final Exam costs reimbursed if the employee does **not** take the related course?

**Answer:** While this has been approved, DA has not issued guidance for implementation to CPOCs. NECPOC expects to receive this within the next two months. They then will forward this to the field as local guidance.